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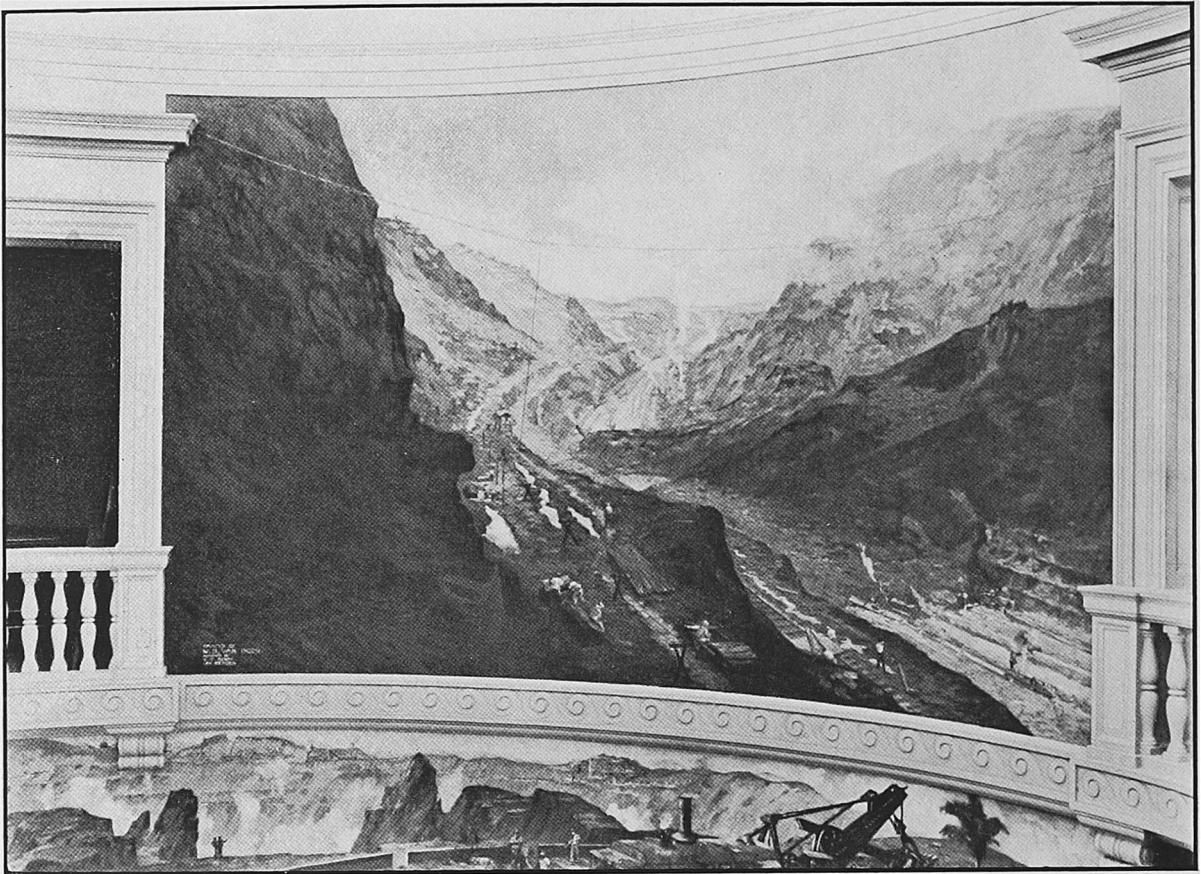
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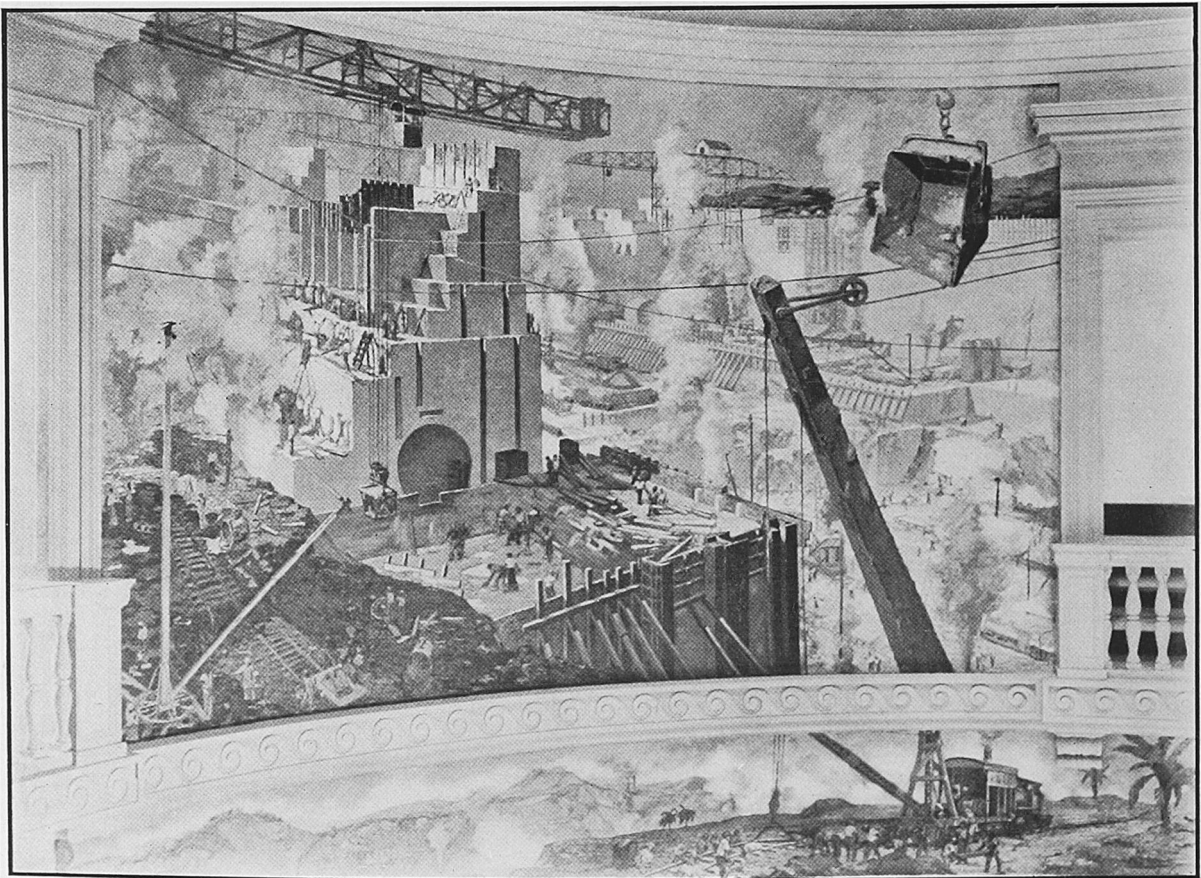
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CUCARACHA SLIDE AND CULEBRA CUT DURING CONSTRUCTION DAYS

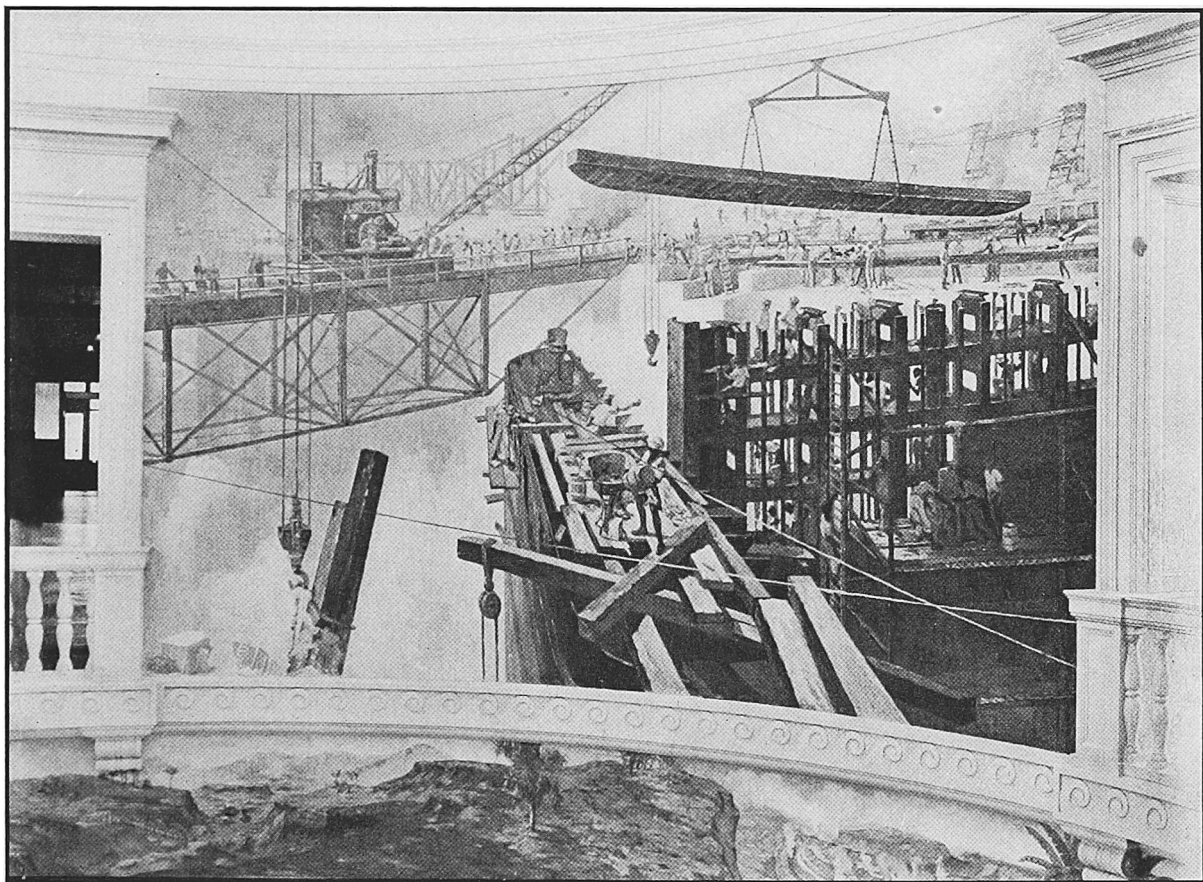


MIRAFLORES LOCK UNDER CONSTRUCTION

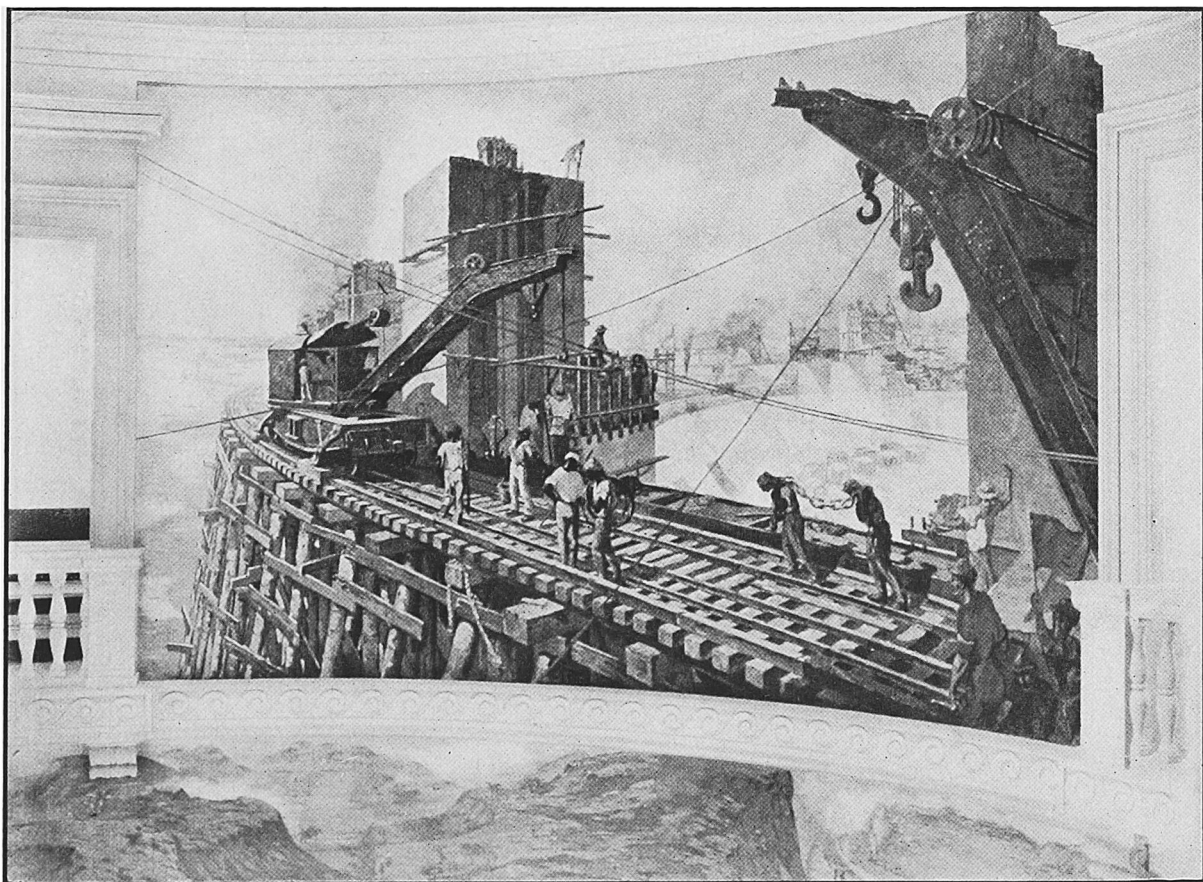
DECORATIONS IN ROTUNDA OF ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, BALBOA, C. Z.

BY WILLIAM B. VAN INGEN

(See page 19)



LOCK GATES UNDER ERECTION



THE GATUN SPILLWAY UNDER CONSTRUCTION  
 DECORATIONS IN ROTUNDA OF ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, BALBOA, C. Z.  
 BY WILLIAM B. VAN INGEN  
 (See opposite page)

## THE MAKING OF A SERIES OF MURALS AT PANAMA

BY WILLIAM B. VAN INGEN

(See pages 17 and 18)

THE Panama Canal appeared to contradict logic: in that its parts were larger than the whole. From the narrow bridge spanning the Great Cut it was evident to me that the whole canal, from ocean to ocean, could be put into that part of it which was being excavated there.

This illusion was not entirely a revelation. I recalled looking into the empty hold of the steamship *Gaelic*, years ago, in the harbor of Honolulu, and, were my eyes to be trusted, the entire vessel could have been readily transported in her own hold. Explanations of such phenomena naturally suggest themselves, but their main value for us, here, is to emphasize the fact that the artist is not a slave of truth: it is to the illusion of the truth he owes allegiance. The academician may live and move and have his being under the government of logic, but the artist lives on no such food. "Give those bones to the dog" as the Spaniards say.

Nevertheless, if the artist's duty be to tell us of the illusion of truth he is also vitally concerned with the truths of the illusion. To be governed by imagination in painting the canal would be like being under the dominion of a gargyle in making the picture of a cathedral. If the gigantic engines employed in digging the canal were as fantastic as hobgoblins of the mind, they were also machineries that must work according to well-known laws of physics. Readily as they might serve as windmills for the charge of a Don Quixote of art encased in his armor of Art for Art's sake, they were nevertheless utilitarian objects, except, perhaps, to the eye of one whose preoccupation with art for art's sake had had its natural result in mental blindness.

Some such thoughts as here suggested were ever in my mind as I tried to solve the problems of putting on canvas the making of the great waterway.

The canal has been happily characterized as the Wonder of Work; it might also be addressed as His Majesty Magnitude. Think of man's making a lake of 164 square miles in area! Think of building a bridge of water 85 feet above the sea on which may be carried safely, from ocean to ocean, the largest ships afloat! Think of man in a hand to hand battle with the mosquito one day and the next day moving a mountain!

The orders I received were simply to show, as far as possible, the making of the canal; but how to express magnitude was in reality the problem imposed on me by the conditions; my constant occupation a study of the expedients of composition by which length and width, height and depth might be displayed. The four spaces were placed at my disposal on the walls of the Administration Building in the Canal Zone, each about eighteen feet by eleven; and a frieze two feet seven inches high and ninety feet long. In two of the four I tried to display the magnitude of the scenes that presented themselves to the eye; in the remaining two, the magnitude of the details of such scenes. In the frieze I sought to show the processes of making a cut nine miles long through the mountains. And

never did an artist have more sympathetic help than had I from every one, high and low, that I met on the canal. I forgot I was an artist, and had genuine regret at not being entitled to a number and a brass check, while any success the paintings may have had came, I believe, from an endeavor to see with the eyes of the man in the ditch. I was a translator, not an originator.

Some explanation of what is meant by the expedients of composition in expressing magnitude may be offered in referring to the panel showing the construction of Miraflores Locks. By leaving out of the completed painting the section of lock wall shown in the right hand lower corner of the original sketch, opportunity was gained for showing the depth to the bottom of the lock. Then, the placing of the enormous boom close to the eye helped to convey the feeling of a person standing, as it were, upon the actual lock wall—though as a matter of fact this section of lock wall was removed from the picture. Then the selection of the point of view from which might be seen the great six-foot steps that formed the side walls of the locks seemed to bring to mind thoughts of the Egyptian pyramids, which we so generally associate in our minds with magnitude. And the peopling of those steps with workmen (this I did not do in the original sketch) gave a standard of measurement which reinforced the suggestion of the pyramids, because there exist similar steps in the Egyptian Wonder of Work. On the canal the illusion of being in Egypt was very strong. I remember the first day I saw the locks at Gatun. On the center wall stood a range-light tower, with architectural details of the Roman period; the instant I saw it the thought flashed over my mind; why was not the form of the obelisk used?

In making the picture of the lock gates the expedient used was an appeal to memories of the giant steel-cage construction of our sky-scrapers, and by making use again of the device of the boom I sought to carry the mind to the boom's base of support, so many feet below the bottom line of the picture.

No attempt was made to give what might be called instantaneous views. I tried to compose into one picture the views to be seen from different standpoints but united in the mind. This was perhaps the most important of the expedients of composition used, and it enabled me to combine different periods of time in the construction work. Never have I felt so strongly as on the Canal Zone that time and space are illusions of reality created by man for his convenience!

Yes, magnitude and motion were the stars by which I was guided.

When the pictures had been placed I took a trip, one fine morning, through the Great Cut. Returning to the Administration Building I hurried to the rotunda to test the effect of the paintings, and received the impression that *as miniatures* they were not bad!

William B. van Ingen